

The Budget—Mr. Mifflin

I make no apologies for attempting to provide, on the advice of my senior military advisers, the ability to continue our defence operational capabilities by taking actions that are difficult. We ask others to take difficult decisions. The Government is also taking difficult decisions. We are listening to the people who have knowledge about providing defence capability to Canada and attempting, in the financial realities of today, to meet the needs of the men and women who serve in Canada's Armed Forces, the men and women who protect the Hon. Member and I and who contribute to international peace and stability.

Mr. Rideout: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Minister could explain why the previous Minister of National Defence would announce \$100 million to be spent on the base in the City of Moncton while a year later, the Department changed its decision and in effect closed the base. What factors came into play?

Mr. McKnight: Mr. Speaker, the actions that have been taken were taken because \$2.74 billion of planned expenditures became unavailable. Those actions were taken because of that reality, and \$2.74 billion is a lot of money.

The base in Moncton to which the Hon. Member refers is basically a supply depot. It has the infrastructure of a full base. We can continue to supply from that region and we have said we would, but it is not necessary to have the infrastructure support of a full military base for a supply operation located in Moncton. We have said that the operation will continue and be rationalized, but not with the infrastructure and support of a full military base.

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have an opportunity to speak on the 1989 Budget this morning. Before I do, though, I would like to publicly thank my Leader, the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) whose courage and integrity has been a great inspiration and an example to me. He has shown me more than anything else that politics can be an honourable profession.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mifflin: On the subject of the Budget, if I could synthesize the comments of my constituents, it would be that this is as bleak a report on our national accounts as

has ever been tabled or attempted to be tabled in the House of Commons. This is a Budget that makes a mockery of the Canadian assertions of sound economic management, breaks the promise of the sacred trust and does not do much for the hope of a brighter tomorrow. It does not do much for the expectation of more jobs. It does not do anything for a stronger commitment to defence and it does less for the vision of economic prosperity.

The name of my riding stands for three great bays on the east coast of Newfoundland, Bonavista Bay, Trinity Bay and Conception Bay. I represent 90,000 people in that riding and they are very special people, descended from a very special breed. My constituents have inherited qualities from their history, their background and their ancestors, qualities that in some ways are paradoxical. They are steadfast and demanding of themselves, yet they are forgiving of others. They are strong of the spirit and strong of the will, yet they are steeped in the milk of human kindness. They have come to accept the hard knocks of life that have been so often dealt their way. Yet they cheerfully return to fight another day. When darkness sets in, we can be philosophical and dismiss it by the very thought that yesterday is over and tomorrow will not last forever. But perhaps more than anything else in the world, we thrive on the fundamental belief that a man's word is his bond. Herein lies the big disappointment and the big disillusionment in this Budget.

• (1250)

This Budget has been called a hard-line Budget. My colleague, the Hon. Minister of National Defence, just called it a difficult Budget. A hard-line budget is bad enough, Mr. Speaker. Low and middle-class households will become the brunt of the Government's deficit-cutting exercise. The largest share of these measures have fallen on the backs of working people. This is the blackness, and what makes this blackness a nightmare is that the policies and measures inherent in the Budget represent the biggest about-face imaginable in the lexicon of promises known in recent political history.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mifflin: There were \$17 billion worth of promises for megaproject after megaproject, from Bonavista—Trinity—Conception to Vancouver Quadra. These prom-